

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method, comprising:

2 sending one or more television signals, including trigger information related to
3 content of the television signals, to a first client terminal via a first channel of a
4 communication network;

5 aggregating at least some of the trigger information related to the content of
6 the sent television signals; and

7 sending at least some of the aggregated trigger information to a second client
8 terminal via a second channel of the communication network.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein aggregating the trigger information related to
2 the content of the sent television signals includes extracting the trigger information
3 from the television signals.

1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein aggregating the trigger information related to
2 the content of the television signals includes receiving at least a portion of the trigger
3 information via a direct feed from a source of the television signals.

1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein aggregating the trigger information related to
2 the content of the television signals includes receiving at least a portion of the trigger
3 information from a third-party entity.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein aggregating the trigger information related to
2 the content of the television signals includes receiving at least a portion of the trigger
3 information from a unit that processes the television signals.

1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising sending at least some of the
2 aggregated trigger information to the second client terminal via a network different
3 from the communication network.

1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein aggregating the trigger information related to
2 the content of the television signals includes receiving the trigger information from at
3 least one collection device among a plurality of collection devices.

1 8. The method of claim 7 wherein the plurality of collection devices include a
2 bank of set top boxes, the method further comprising:
3 tuning each set top box to a channel corresponding to a television signal;
4 using the set top boxes to obtain trigger information from the television signal
5 on the respective channels that the set top boxes are tuned to; and
6 aggregating the trigger information obtained by the set top boxes and sending
7 the aggregated trigger information to the second client terminal.

1 9. The method of claim 7 wherein the plurality of collection devices include a
2 plurality of deployed client terminals, the method further comprising:
3 requesting the deployed client terminals to send trigger information;
4 for the deployed client terminals, determining whether the trigger information
5 to send has been previously sent;

6 if the trigger information is determined to have not been previously sent,
7 sending a copy of the trigger information from at least one of the deployed client
8 terminals; and

9 receiving the copy of the trigger information sent from the at least one of the
10 deployed client terminals and delivering the trigger information to the second client
11 terminal.

1 10. The method of claim 7, further comprising modifying the trigger information
2 received from the collection device, prior to sending that trigger information to the
3 second client terminal.

1 11. An article of manufacture, comprising:
2 a machine-readable medium having instructions stored thereon to:
3 aggregate at least some trigger information related to content of
4 television signals that are sent to a first client terminal via a first channel of a
5 communication network; and
6 send at least some of the aggregated trigger information to a second
7 client terminal via a second channel of the communication network.

1 12. The article of manufacture of claim 11 wherein the instructions to aggregate
2 at least some trigger information related to the content of the television signals
3 include instructions to receive the trigger information from a plurality of collection
4 devices tuned to a channel corresponding to a television signal, the machine-
5 readable medium further including instructions stored thereon to:

6 receive the trigger information from each of the collection devices, the
7 collection devices capable to obtain the trigger information from the television signal
8 on the respective channels that the collection devices are tuned to; and
9 aggregate the trigger information received from the collection devices and
10 send the aggregated trigger information to the second client terminal.

1 13. The article of manufacture of claim 11 wherein the instructions to aggregate
2 at least some trigger information related to the content of the television signals
3 include instructions to receive the trigger information from a plurality of collection
4 devices comprising deployed client terminals, the machine-readable medium further
5 including instructions stored thereon to:

6 request the deployed client terminals to send trigger information;
7 determine whether the trigger information to send has been previously sent
8 by any one of the deployed client terminals;
9 if the trigger information is determined to have not been previously sent,
10 receive a copy of the trigger information sent from at least one of the deployed client
11 terminals; and
12 deliver the trigger information to the second client terminal.

1 14. The article of manufacture of claim 11 wherein the machine-readable medium
2 further includes instructions stored thereon to modify the trigger information prior to
3 sending the trigger information to the second client terminal.

1 15. An apparatus, comprising:
2 an aggregator communicatively coupled to a broadcast center of an
3 interactive television system, the aggregator capable to aggregate at least some

4 trigger information related to content of television signals that are sent from the
5 broadcast center to a first client terminal via a first channel of a communication
6 network of the interactive television system, the aggregator further capable to send
7 at least some of the aggregated trigger information to a second client terminal via a
8 second channel of the communication network.

1 16. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the aggregator includes a server to direct
2 trigger information, provided from deployed client terminals, to the second client
3 terminal.

1 17. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the aggregator includes an input to
2 receive the trigger information from a plurality of collection devices comprising set
3 top boxes deployed at the broadcast center to receive the television signals.

1 18. An interactive television system, comprising:
2 a broadcast center to send television signals, along with information related
3 to content of the television signals, to a first client terminal via a first channel of a
4 communication network coupled to the broadcast center; and
5 an aggregator communicatively coupled to the broadcast center, the
6 aggregator capable to aggregate at least some of the trigger information related to
7 the content of television signals that are sent from the broadcast center to the first
8 client terminal, the aggregator further capable to send at least some of the
9 aggregated trigger information to a second client terminal via a second channel of
10 the communication network.

1 19. The system of claim 18, further comprising a direct feed from a source of the
2 television signals to the aggregator to provide at least a portion of the trigger
3 information to the aggregator.

1 20. The system of claim 18, further comprising a third-party service to provide at
2 least a portion of the trigger information to the aggregator.

1 21. The system of claim 18, further comprising a unit disposed in the broadcast
2 center to process the television signals and to provide the information related to the
3 content of the television signals to the aggregator.

1 22. The system of claim 18, further comprising a plurality of collection devices to
2 provide the trigger information to the aggregator.

1 23. The system of claim 22 wherein the plurality of collection devices include a
2 bank of set top boxes communicatively coupled to the broadcast center and to the
3 aggregator, the set top boxes being tuned to a channel corresponding to a television
4 signal and capable to obtain trigger information from the television signal on the
5 respective channels that the set top boxes are tuned to, the aggregator capable to
6 receive the trigger information obtained by the set top boxes and to send the
7 aggregated trigger information to the second client terminal.

1 24. The system of claim 22 wherein the plurality of collection devices include a
2 plurality of deployed client terminals coupled to the communication network, the
3 aggregator capable to request the deployed client terminals to send trigger
4 information that the client terminals receive, the deployed client terminals capable to

5 determine whether the trigger information to send has been previously sent to the
6 aggregator, at least one of the deployed client terminals capable to send a copy of
7 the trigger information if the trigger information is determined to have not been
8 previously sent, the aggregator capable to receive the copy of the trigger information
9 sent from the at least one of the deployed client terminals and to deliver the trigger
10 information to the second client terminal.

1 25. A method, comprising:
2 sending one or more television signals, including trigger information related to
3 content of the television signals, to a first client terminal via a first channel of a
4 communication network;
5 aggregating at least some of the trigger information related to the content of
6 the sent television signals, wherein aggregation of the trigger information includes:
7 requesting deployed client terminals to send trigger information;
8 determining whether the trigger information to send has been
9 previously sent;
10 if the trigger information is determined to have not been previously
11 sent, receiving a copy of the trigger information from at least one of the
12 deployed client terminals; and
13 sending at least some of the aggregated trigger information to a second client
14 terminal via a second channel of the communication network.

1 26. The method of claim 25, further comprising modifying the copy of the trigger
2 information received from the deployed client terminal, prior to sending that trigger
3 information to the second client terminal.

1 27. The method of claim 25, further comprising receiving the trigger information
2 from at least one of a source of the television signal, a third-party entity, or a plurality
3 of collection devices.

1 28. An interactive television system, comprising:
2 a broadcast center to send television signals, along with information related
3 to content of the television signals, to a first client terminal via a first channel of a
4 communication network coupled to the broadcast center;

5 an aggregator communicatively coupled to the broadcast center, the
6 aggregator capable to aggregate at least some of the trigger information related to
7 the content of television signals that are sent from the broadcast center to the first
8 client terminal, the aggregator further capable to send at least some of the
9 aggregated trigger information to a second client terminal via a second channel of
10 the communication network; and

11 a plurality of set top boxes communicatively coupled to the broadcast center
12 and to the aggregator, the set top boxes being tuned to a channel corresponding to
13 a television signal and capable to obtain trigger information from the television signal
14 on the respective channels that the set top boxes are tuned to, the aggregator
15 capable to receive the trigger information obtained by the set top boxes and to send
16 the aggregated trigger information to the second client terminal.

1 29. The system of claim 28 wherein the set top boxes include a cable modem
2 capable to transmit the trigger information obtained from the television signal to the
3 aggregator.

1 30. The system of claim 28 wherein the set top boxes are coupled to the
2 communication network to receive the television signals available on a plurality of
3 channels of the communication network.

1 31. A method, comprising:

2 sending one or more television signals, including trigger information related to
3 content of the television signals, to a first client terminal via a first channel of a
4 communication network having a plurality of different channels, the communication
5 network comprising a portion of an interactive television network through which the
6 television signals may be distributed to the first client terminal, the trigger
7 information including addresses where data regarding the content of the television
8 signals may be accessed from a network different from the communication network;

9 aggregating at least some of the trigger information related to the content of
10 the sent television signals, including obtaining the trigger information from the
11 television signals and storing the obtained trigger information in a storage medium,
12 wherein storing the obtained trigger information in the storage medium includes
13 recording characteristics related to the trigger information; and

14 sending at least some of the aggregated trigger information to a second client
15 terminal via a second channel of the communication network, the second channel of
16 the communication network being different from the first channel and capable to use
17 a communication protocol different from a communication protocol used on the first
18 channel, the second client terminal being a different type of terminal than the first
19 client terminal and capable to process the aggregated trigger information separately
20 from trigger information processed by the first client terminal.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the aggregated trigger information is capable of being received from deployed client terminals, the method further comprising:

- requesting the deployed client terminals to send trigger information;
- for the deployed client terminals, determining whether the trigger information to send has been previously sent;
- if the trigger information is determined to have not been previously sent, sending a copy of the trigger information from at least one of the deployed client terminals; and
- receiving the copy of the trigger information sent from the at least one of the deployed client terminals and delivering the trigger information to the second client terminal.

33. An interactive television system, the system comprising:

- a broadcast center to send television signals, along with information related to content of the television signals, to a first client terminal via a first channel of a communication network coupled to the broadcast center, the first channel being one of a plurality of channels of the communication network capable to carry television signals, the first client terminal being communicatively coupled to the communication network to allow the television signals to be provided to the first client terminal via the communication network; and
- an aggregator communicatively coupled to the broadcast center, the aggregator capable to aggregate at least some of the trigger information related to the content of television signals that are sent from the broadcast center to the first client terminal, including being capable to obtain the trigger information from the television signals and to store the obtained trigger information in a storage medium coupled to the aggregator, wherein storage of the obtained trigger information in the

15 storage medium includes recordation of characteristics related to the trigger
16 information in the storage medium, the aggregator further capable to send at least
17 some of the aggregated trigger information to a second client terminal via a second
18 channel of the communication network, the second client terminal being a different
19 type of terminal than the first client terminal, the second channel capable to use a
20 communication protocol different than a communication protocol on the first channel
21 for the aggregated trigger information sent to the second client terminal, the second
22 client terminal capable to process the aggregated trigger information separately from
23 trigger information processed by the first client terminal.

1 34. The system of claim 33, further comprising a plurality of set top boxes
2 communicatively coupled to the broadcast center and to the aggregator, the set top
3 boxes being tuned to a channel corresponding to a television signal and capable to
4 obtain trigger information from the television signal on the respective channels that
5 the set top boxes are tuned to, the aggregator capable to receive the trigger
6 information obtained by the set top boxes and to send the aggregated trigger
7 information to the second client terminal.